

**Political History Collection
Interview H.0001.05 : Tape 5**

Melvyn Goldstein, Editor

**Center for Research on Tibet
Department of Anthropology**

and

**Case Western Reserve University
Cleveland, Ohio**

©2004

Location of Interview: Dharamsala, India
Date of Interview: October 1992
Language of Interview: Tibetan
Interviewed by: Paljor Tsarong
Name: Drakten [Tib. grags bstan]
Gender: Male
Age: 57
Date of Birth: 1935

Abstract

Drakten [Tib. grags bstan] was a monk official in the traditional Tibetan government who discusses in detail the political events that occurred in Lhasa in the 1950s. In this interview, he discusses in detail the political events that occurred in Lhasa in the 1950s, including the Dalai Lama's escape to India and the Dalai Lama's meeting and discussions with Zhou Enlai in 1956 in India regarding democratic reforms in Tibet. Additionally, he discusses the fighting at Norbulinga in March 1959.

Tape 5

A: Lheding continued saying, "At this moment, religion and politics [Tib. bstan pa chab srid] and Ganden Phodrang are at the critical point of life and death [Tib. shi son gyi mtshams la thug], so if the government has a high status, even if Tsomönling Labrang became like a beggar, the government would consider it. But if the government had damage inflicted [Tib. nyams nyes], then there is no reason to look at Tsomönling Labrang, and the whole of Tibet is gone. So there is nothing to think about. The keys of Tsomönling Labrang have today been put on the table and however you wish to make use of it, please do so." Lheding forcefully said that. So there was a lot of clapping. And in this way, the meeting on that day was leaning in favor of those who wanted to fight.

The next day's meeting continued on the same note. It was probably not convenient for Kündeling Dzasa to make decisions as Lheding did since their Dechang (managers) were probably powerful. Still, the night of yesterday's meeting, he returned and consulted with them, and the next day he said exactly as Lheding had said. Namely that, "You can use Kündeling Labrang inside out in whatever manner you wish." So now, some funds began to grow immediately.

Then the meeting was moved to Shabden Lhagang. Just then the Dalai Lama had spoken to the representatives, right? Anyway, whatever was said, you know the Chinese used to hear everything. So the Dalai Lama always wished to tell the people not to do things. Even previously with the Chushigandru, the Dalai Lama said to do things to make the Chinese anger subside as well as to cease the Khamba's disturbance. Even this time, the Dalai Lama was saying, "Try to solve the problem. Do things to alleviate the Chinese anger," and he said that to the meeting representatives. So he was absolutely relaxed. From our side there was another matter. I think it was 3 days later. On the 5th, Nechung was consulted at the Dalai Lama's chamber.

Since it was in the room, exactly what was asked and what replies were made, nobody could hear, right? Later, what we heard was that the Dalai Lama requested whether he should think about leaving or whether to stay and work things out with the Chinese. Nechung gave the secret prophecy saying that if the Dalai Lama left within 3 days, then it would be guaranteed that no harm would come to his life or safety. What we heard was that the Kashag ministers were also there with the Dalai Lama, and others. Nechung did not give the prophecy but had gone into a trance. Then he ordered everyone to leave. He was in a trance and attendants were holding him. Everyone left except the Kashag ministers (Tib. sawang). To the sawang, he showed the threatening sign by pointing his index finger and his pinky fingers [Tib. sdigs mdzub] and said, "Get out [Tib. pyir 'then]," and the sawang also shuffled out. Then, held up by the two tutors and with the Dalai Lama, there were only 3 people. So here was given a very secret prophecy, that if the Dalai Lama left in 3 days, no harm would come to him. Finally, this had to be told to the Kashag. Let's say internally everything was confirmed so it was necessary to make preparations for the journey. The Kashag had immediately called on Chemmo and said if internally everything was finalized to take the Dalai Lama out, then, "Today you take all the responsibility of making arrangements. So you do everything. The Kashag has placed full authority in your hands and there is to be no discussion back and forth with us. It will be like the proverb, 'The clay pot would be broken between two people [Tib. mi gnyis bar la rdza chag].' There's no time for that. Now you say to do this or that and we will just follow. You are the one fully in charge."

Immediately, he asked Trekhang Khenjung to come to his quarters. It was known that he was a very reliable man and a very good person. It seems that he was one whom Chemmo could show his heart and talk to. He told Changkyim [Trekhang] Khenjung to go to the Indian Consulate in Dekyilingka and tell them that the Lhasa situation was already known to them, but that they reached the time where they were concerned about the Dalai Lama's safety. Therefore, if the Chinese took a very militant approach, they wanted to ensure the safety of the Dalai Lama, [recording stopped for a while].

Kungö Chemmo had instructed Trekhang Khenjung to go to Dekyilingka and say, "You already know how the situation in Lhasa is. If the Chinese all of a sudden suppress through force, we will have come to a point where there is an urgent danger to his life. If there is danger to his life, then he has to leave Norbulinga. And if he does that, then the only place for him to go is India. So if he has to think about going from Norbulinga to India, then no matter what border the Dalai Lama has to arrive at, please secretly send a telegram so that he is not stopped and help him be safely and immediately brought over." The Indian representative told Trekhang Khenjung that this was alright. "However, I must meet Phala himself, so if he could come here (it would be good)." Kungö Phala said, "Today I just cannot come at all. Whether I come there or not, I don't have anything else to say. Just now in Norbulinga there is such danger to the Dalai Lama's body and everyone is just looking at us. If we go back and forth and make relations with Dekyilingka, the people might see it and ask what our reason is in such an emergency situation for going to Dekyilingka. They would definitely think that we were thinking of taking the Dalai Lama some place. So I can't come today and even if I did, that's all I have to say, so please definitely have the telegram sent. That's it." That was one.

The second part, Kündeling Dzasa and Chemmo seemed to be very good friends. They could rely on each other. Kungö Kündeling was especially quick thinking and capable. Besides, Kündeling Labrang was big and they had the ability to do something if they had to do it.

Since he was someone who could be relied on, Chemmo told Kündeling to come to his house. So if the Dalai Lama could not stay at Norbulinga, then something had to be arranged, right? So Chemmo told Kündeling to take full responsibility of the Ramagang boat crossing. The main idea was to take the straight path since the situation was such that routes may close anytime and others could open too, even if they used to be dangerous. Whatever route was to be decided would be decided as it stood then, and that was to be the Ramagang boat crossing route. Once the Dalai Lama crossed the river to Lhoka, then it was much less dangerous.

The way they left towards Ramagang is as follows: At Norbulinga there were so many government horses and mules. All were well fed, since they didn't have much work. There were about 200 of them. However, it was thought that if one went to use the animals from there, the place was full of spies. Among the Tibetans too there were Chinese spies. So if we used the animals in the Norbulinga stables, then it would probably be known that the Dalai Lama was being taken out and people would suspect this. If he had to leave, and since there were no cars, animals definitely would have had to be used and everyone was watching. Since the people and the Chinese were all paying attention to this as an indication, if the Dalai Lama left it would be better to use some other horses and sneak out. With so many stable workers there, they could not be used. This is what Chemmo said. "At Ramagang there is a Kündeling estate called Tshakur [Tib. tsha khur]. It is close to Kündeling. Usually Kündeling's horses are sent to graze at this Ramagang estate." So Chemmo said, "By saying that the horses are being sent to graze at the Tshakur estate, get your labrang's horses ready and whatever you have, even if the village horses are no good, they will be okay. So round up all the horses from there. For all the horses, put a saddle bag and a blanket or two under the saddle and in the bag, put all necessary food items. When the Dalai Lama is ready to leave, there will be a notification at that moment. Since it is a secret, no prior notification is possible. So have everything ready so that when the notice is given, they should leave right away. Take one or two absolutely reliable people with you. When the Dalai Lama leaves from here he will just be secretly hurried along, and from there the Kündeling Labrang horses will be used. Otherwise, the Dalai Lama cannot leave conspicuously since he will be stopped." So Kündeling agreed. "If one goes just up a bit, it is Trip [Tib. grib] Tsecholing. Just a bit up from there, one passes a hillock called Peding [Tib. dpal lding] between Tsel [Tib. tshal] and Lhadong Shenka [Tib. lha gdong shan kha]. On the other side of the river at Peding there is a large Chinese military camp. On this side of the river, where the road crosses the Ramagang boat crossing, is Nortölinga, which is also held by the Chinese. So the route is very dangerous, so check to see that the Chinese in these two areas are not trying to block it in any way. Place sentries there. Then at Chagya Garpo [Tib. bya skyag dkar po], the high peak, also send a sentry there and hold that peak. At potentially dangerous spots on the route, post soldiers. We have to be fully prepared when taking the Dalai Lama out and not be disorganized, so please give me one regiment." Kündeling said, upon asking which was more suitable, "It was said that the Bodyguard Regiment was too conspicuous, so please give me 100 Trapchi soldiers." So Chemmo gave the order that it was fine and to take them.

Kündeling went to his house at Dekyilingka and called the Trapchi depön, the rupön and the gyagpön. He said, "If the Dalai Lama has to leave, we need to keep watch on the route. This is not to be known to anybody, so each of you have to swear an oath." They put the Dalai Lama's photo on their heads and said that they would not tell anyone, whoever it may be. They put the photo to their heads and made the pledge. Then they were told the details. Then Kündeling said, "Tonight, after dark, I am coming to the barracks. We all will have to leave at night, not during the day. Divide the groups that are going to go with the rupön, gyagpön, and one group go to Peding, and place a sentry there and see if they are not on the alert. And if they come to stop the crossing, a way must be found to stop it. Then in Nortölinga, if they even hear the horses' hooves, since all that separates them is the river and the group will be traveling in clear view from the other side of the river, if there happens to be any force there hidden among the rocks, shrubs or any sheltering spot, you have to have many soldiers distributed and try and stop any possible action. One group should go ahead, past Kyishong [Tib. skyid gshongs], and if there are any hill tracks to the road, on the side of all tracks, post one bren-gun unit. Then, when the Dalai Lama is one day's journey ahead, those who are waiting for the arrival should go ahead for two days and wait for the arrival. The ones who are behind will be waiting at the next day's arrival place and so on. In this way there will be one going ahead and one remaining behind, and with all the instructions about guarding the route, the Dalai Lama's leaving will best be served." With these instructions, the soldiers were sent that night. The soldiers obviously had no horses and in addition to their guns and food, they each carried one box of ammunition. They were let out that night. For the soldiers it was very difficult. They took bren-guns and mortars. At that time, their arms and ammunition were just exceptional. They said they were American. Short guns holding many bullets, such exceptional quality. The arms were good and so they were sent in that way.

Q: Were these arms the ones that were there earlier or were they new ones?

A: They must have gotten them from the Americans. It is said that Tsarong procured them. The Bodyguard Regiment all had those weapons. The Trapchi Regiment also had them. Anyway, the arms were excellent.

So now, Kündeling received his duty. Taktra Dzasa was in Norbulinga. He came to Kungö Chemmo and asked if there was anything he could do. So Chemmo told him, "Don't stay here now. If you stay here then there is nothing for you to do. You should go to your hermitage (Tib. Talungdra Ritrö [Tib. ri khrod]) in case the Dalai Lama for some reason, like the use of arms and if they would do reckless things, has to leave from here and he has to pass down that way, you will be there. So you go down, and most important of all, look at the situation and get prepared from your Labrang, since your labrang is prosperous. So if the Dalai Lama has to leave from here, it will be a very tight unit of a few people. He cannot travel in a large group and they will never be able to carry anything with them, not even food. When the late Dalai Lama went to China, he went via Nagchu, and the Nagchu Drukhang [Tib. sgrub khang] Labrang got all the food ready for the journey and was really a great help. This time you go down and get all the necessary things ready.

(Note: Now there was, I think, Gyagpön Kelsang Dramdrü [Tib. skal bzang dgra 'dul] who was sent somewhere else. It's not clear on Kungö's tape, but in some other conversations.) Via Nyetang [Tib. mnyes thang], some other sentries were sent. Now it was the 5th [14 March], right? That's when Chemmo got the order. That evening, Chemmo went out of the walled compound of Norbulinga. People who were all around said, "Chemmo is making rounds." He took some soldiers and servants, and was wearing a chubchen [Tib. phyu chen] dress and had a torch in his hand. All the areas had a gyagpön and jugpön and were divided up into groups. Each group had two officials as leaders and it was all planned from the gagö Command military headquarters. When it got dark, Chemmo went outside and said, "Are you there, are you there? Now be alert, be careful." When he came out like that, they were shining torches on his face and they were quite rowdy. So he told them that, "It is not their fault, but from tomorrow on I will be coming every night and don't ever shine the torch if we ask you who you are." Every morning, a password was distributed and when asked who they were, they were to answer, "I'm Dramdrü," and the next night "I'm Targye," and things like that. The gyagpön were given the password every day. When they did that, we could recognize who our people were. He told them, "If you shine torches and do all sorts of things, the soldiers will fire at, you know. It is a time of emergency and it will be a lost cause." Every night from the 5th to the 7th, Chemmo went out. Since he had done that for three nights, they were used to it and just said, "Kungö Chemmo is coming, Kungö Chemmo is coming," and kept silent. The leader just got up to see if he was going to say anything and the rest just kept quiet. That's how the order was made.

In Chemmo's mind, this was a rehearsal for the actual day. To the others, they thought Chemmo was checking around. Then, the northern gate, the east gate, there were about two representatives. The west gate, everything was wall-blocked. If he came down, then only the Gusung Regiment gate was open. If he went up, then the main was open, otherwise everything was blocked with stones. The real reason was that if people went from all the gates, then spies might get through. Then irrigation water ditches that passed through the walls were also guarded by one tsidrun, one lay official and two soldiers. They just had to put a carpet next to the ditch and sit and watch. So the sentry posting was well planned. It was said that whatever preparations the gates were closed, like a fish goes under water and escapes via the ditch, then that's it. If one person who was posted by the Chinese escaped, everybody would know what was happening here in Norbulinga. Even though the gates were walled up with stones, before that, the gates were locked and the keys were given to the gag (Secretariat). Nobody had the keys. Outside the main gate, about 20 tsidrun were posted. It was Barshi Jedrun, [Tib. bar gzhis rje drung lags] and their kind. Unless there was work, not one person would get through. Chemmo made such an organization at Norbulinga.

On the 8th night, just as the moon was rising, the Dalai Lama went from Takten Mingyur [Tib. rtag brtan mi 'gyur] Palace to Gombokhang Temple. From there via the main gate, he went to the Ramagang boat crossing on foot. So for the last time, Chemmo had made the rounds to deceive the people. If they had suddenly brought the Dalai Lama out, then something would have happened. If Chemmo had come out suddenly, then they would say, "Chemmo has come. Chemmo has come." But since he made the rounds every night, no one noticed. With Chemmo were soldiers in the front, and behind them was the Dalai Lama wearing a maroon chupa with a wool cap pulled down and a 303 English Carbine slung on his shoulder as if he was Chemmo's servant. Gadang and the Gusung Depön were with the soldiers. In front, Chemmo went and the sides were surrounded by soldiers. It had already been arranged earlier that no torches would be switched on, right? Then they went for a round and then ahead diverted toward the fields filled with pebbles [dramtang, Tib. gram thang], with no one noticing. Forget about the Dalai Lama leaving, no one knew anything had taken place. There were only a few in the entourage. As soon as he reached there, I don't know what advance notice was given, maybe Kündeling had a watch set, but Kündeling came with Trekhang's horse. Trekhang had this beautiful light brown trotter which he put in the horse cart. Kündeling had arranged for that horse to be brought and that was for the Dalai Lama to ride. The horse was saddled and brought from Ramagang with Kündeling riding by the dramtang. They met at the dramtang and when they said, "Who is it?" there was the reply, "I'm Dramdrü or I'm Targye," that thing. Then Kündeling identified himself. Kündeling dismounted and the Dalai Lama rode, and Chemmo and Kündeling held the horse along and they walked. They walked through all the dramtang to Ramagang boat crossing. Once they crossed, the Dalai Lama horse's was the same. The others then rode. Each had a saddle bag with food items. If everything was not in the bags, and if one or two servants just brought some food, then if all of a sudden the Chinese fired and everybody scattered, only the horse with food would have food and not the others. So that's why each saddle bag had a food ration.

The Dalai Lama, at the time when the moon rose, went from Takten Palace to Gombokhang. I was on the east of the Takten Phodrang, where one comes from the Kashag. The yellow wall is this way, and at that place there is the back door of the Dalai Lama's kitchen, Söthab Tago [Tib. gsol thab ltag sgo] at the yellow wall. I was the guard at that gate. To enter through the yellow gate, there is a way from the gag. The other is the Söthab Tago. There is no other. If one is allowed from the yellow gate, the Takten Palace outer chamber is in the front. So they said that this was very important and the guard that was posted was Kungö Ta Lama's tsidrun, Kelsangla. The moment Ta Lama heard that the Dalai Lama was told to leave within three days, he recalled Kelsangla. Kungö Ta lama quietly left (escaped) earlier from Norbulinga via Ramagang, before even the Dalai Lama left. So Kelsangla was withdrawn. Kungö Nyima Gyentsenla [Tib. nyi ma rgyal mtshan lags] was sent to Tsurphu [Tib. mtshur phu]

Karmapa to tell him that it was better to leave.

The reason Kelsangla left first was that at the gag, there was the Nangmagang which today is called Private Office. Kungö Ta Lama was the head of the Nangmagang and the secretary [Tib. drung yig] was Kungö Tarala. No one was more trustworthy than the people who work in Nangmagang. So Ta Lama took the responsibility and put Kelsangla. As soon as Kelsang la left, Kündeling and Tara la were the leaders of Kagö Command Center military headquarters. I told you that they were voted in. The replacement was sent from Kagö Command headquarters. So Kündeling sent his tsidrun, Temba Söpala [Tib. bstan pa bzod pa lags], since who else would be more reliable than one's own. But since Temba Söpala had to be sent to Tshakur estate, he was withdrawn. So instead, I was sent. My uncle was considered a very reliable man with no Chinese connections whatsoever. So even we were considered trustworthy, mainly since I was in the Chöjin Legung. The heads of the Chöjin Legung were Kündeling, Namseling and Talungdra Dzasa. Since Kündeling was in the Chöjin Legung, he considered me very trustworthy. So I was appointed as the guard, and because of that, since I could go in and out, I knew clearly about details of the Dalai Lama's escape. Otherwise, no one knew. With me was tsidrun Gendün Chömpela [Tib. dge 'dun chos 'phel lags]. He was my helper. Since we had to guard day and night, we were just so sleepy. Just inside the gate there were two small rooms where the sweepers lived. In this room we moved a set of bedding and took turns sleeping. The Dalai Lama went as I stated. I was inside. At first there was a lot of movement, and then gradually, it was quiet. And then some more noise and the Dalai Lama left. There were just a few with him. Then I called Gendün Chömpe and said that he had to take an oath. Nobody knew that the Dalai Lama was leaving except us, so we both swore to each other that we would not tell anyone. We stayed at the gate. The Dalai Lama left about the time the moon was rising. Just before the Dalai Lama left, about the time it was getting dark, a person came whom I could not recognize from that distance. At this time, the sawang were coming wearing chupa with their servants. Each of the servants had a bag-like item on them and they were coming via the Söthab Tago. I was told by Temba Söpala that I should not let anyone in and [we] should be careful (Note: seems he was saying this to his companion. Tibetan speech has an interesting way of leaving out the subject pronoun). As the sawang were coming wearing the chubchain and a wool cap, one couldn't recognize them, right? So I got up and with the bayonet attached, pointed the gun at them to try and stop them. It was Sawang Surkhang! [Laughter] He said, "Kusho, Kusho, we have to go to the Dalai Lama's quarters." How can I stop the sawang? I immediately withdrew my gun and then he told the servants, "Yes, you all stay here and these things, we will take them."

At first they were going inside but when I stopped them, the Kungö took the bags in themselves. I just wondered why. So the servants of Surkhang, Shasur and Liushar stayed.

A: The Kungö were going in and then leaving from there for good. The two of us knew that but we had sworn, right? So we just kept quiet. The servants, thinking that the Kungö went inside and may come out, suddenly didn't dare to go anywhere. During such a time, one could take only one person with you and that one had to be the most trusted one. However, not one word was told to them. They stayed waiting that whole night. The next day, they were there. We were guards and we had to stay. They stayed not even knowing anything, the Kungös had already left [Chuckles]. They stayed that whole day. The Dalai Lama's party left on the 8th night, and the servants stayed the whole of the 9th. Even the night of the 9th they were there. Until the shelling started, they were staying with us like that until. My God! [Tib. 'ar dzi la].

At around 3, Chemmo went to his house. This was told later. Later, Chemmo and others were talking, Chemmo himself had said it. He said, "At around 3, I went to my quarters." At the front of Chemmo's pillow was a pegam [Tib. dpe sgam]. Since he usually liked to play (mahjong), he carried gold coins in a wallet that hung from a belt or dalenzi [Ch. da lian zhi], and since it was heavy he used to put it in the cupboard. There were a few rows of gold coins and when it was time for gambling, he used to take a row or so. So he had a row or two and just before he left he thought that he would take them with him. But then it occurred to him, "What if among my servants there was a spy and if I touched those coins at a time like this, when I'm not going to go and gamble, they might think that I was getting ready to leave. So if servants think that I might be getting ready to leave then it would be too much [Tib. dpe bzo gi red]," so he just drank a cup of tea and left it all intact. When he came [to India], he had nothing. When it comes to the Dalai Lama's safety, one obviously has to be careful and one can not think about yourself even when it concerned a few coins in a bag. So he said he just drank a cup of tea and came. Generally, people like Chemmo, if they just played it safe [Tib. bzo po byas nas bsda], it didn't matter where Tibet was heading, their generation would have a good life. However, they risked everything and it so happened that the Dalai Lama's escape was successful. If it had not been and they were captured by the Chinese, one cannot say that the moment the Chinese seized the Dalai Lama that they would shoot him, but since he was in their hands, they would calculate that it would be better to use him than to shoot him and if not useful, then maybe shoot him. However, people like Chemmo, the Jigyab Khembo, the Gusung Depön, the officials who escorted the Dalai Lama, in what manner are they [the Chinese] going to kill them? It's sure that they would be killed. Actually and truly, it was possible to wish that I would really not suffer so much. That my relative or a servant would just shoot me, and that by killing me, a close friend would benefit from me a lot. That's how one's life was risked. If it succeeded, then it was for the benefit of the religion and if not, you died. My, my [Tib. 'a dzi, 'a dzi], the way Chemmo and the others thought, and the way they made decisions. I swear by the three jewels that it's extraordinary and they even deserved to have individuals prostrate before them. It's like that, but most of the people do not understand. And since they do not understand, they say the kudrak were not doing things right. Of course, it's true, there were some who just didn't do anything good. Still, if one looks at those who did things, it's astounding.

Q: In 1956 the Dalai Lama stayed in India. At that time, he met Zhou Enlai, and thinking that the Dalai Lama might stay, they said that the democratic reforms were not so critical and could always be postponed. Just after they said those things, did things get better in Lhasa? There were some talks about some of the Chinese workers being withdrawn. There was some talks that some left. What did you hear about this?

A: Regarding democratic reforms, there was a lot of urgency. As for the people who were staying in Lhasa, it was said that the reforms would be done according to the terms of the 17-Point Agreement. After the Dalai Lama went to China and after meeting with Chairman Mao and having told him about the situation in Tibet, Mao told the Dalai Lama that if there were no democratic reforms it would be alright. "Since you have said to postpone it for 6 years, that's alright by all means. Besides that, if you want to extend it for another 20 or 30 years, and the question of not wanting reforms for the time being, if the people don't want them, then you can leave it. There will come a time when the people themselves will want it. There will be a feeling of delay, but if it is not in

accordance with the wishes of the people, then you can extend it as long as you want." After the Dalai Lama returned, it is also said that the Dalai Lama told Mao that, "In Tibet, regarding important matters, if it has to be done in such and such a way, and if the Chinese leaders are not in accordance [Tib. stabs bstun] with this and are being obstinate [Tib. Ita ba rang khyer] regarding Tibetan customs and thinking and what they said, then I will send them down immediately." It is said that the Dalai Lama said this during dinner in the presence of Zhou Enlai, Zhu De and others. In response to this, Mao said that it was alright and to do so by all means. After the Dalai Lama came up, in the Jensei Phodrang Palace, the Dalai Lama gave a teaching. I think it was on the Stage of Paths [Tib. lam rim]. Since a lot of people came, he spoke in public. There were also a lot of Chinese officials present. He told the people to, "Do things well and don't worry about the reforms. If the Chinese do unthinkable things, then we can petition.

And I will request whoever it is to be recalled. If the Chinese do not take into consideration Tibetan thinking and customs, and do anything recklessly, I will send them down." He said that to the people gathered. From that time on, the urgency on the question of reforms subsided. After this and sort of as a preparation for the reforms, the Preparatory Committee for the Tibet Autonomous Region and the County Level Administrative Offices started. They then started doing this in a peaceful way and the question of using various miser to instigate new ways was not implemented. So this reform, they were unable to do.

Q: Some say that in Lhasa, the Chinese were militarily preparing themselves and constructing battlements. And also during that period, that Tibetan and Chinese soldiers, when they met on the road, would have fights. So there seems to have been some problems. It is also said that during the Mönlam some people were caught who had a gun or a bomb. So in Lhasa, if we say 1955-58, then when did they prepare militarily and build fortifications?

A: Regarding the fortifications, this is what happened. Earlier there were no special fortifications.

Q: Not in 1951-54?

A: No, not at that time. However, where the Chinese leaders were staying, sandbags were laid on the walls. This was done earlier, I think, but it was only for the residences of the important representatives. After Chushigandru left for Lhoka, and as a result of this, then all the Chinese residences sandbagged their windows and all around the roofs. Then at Yuthok House, at the side of the garden, this way was the main road to the Yuthok Bridge. The one that goes in front of the palace, this way the road from Jangsebshar [Tib. lchang gseb shar] meets, from that side is the road that comes from the palace circumambulation around the Potala.

The road from Drepung and Norbulinga meet here. At the side of Yuthok Linga Park, the Chinese built a huge battlement [Tib. so khung]. Later when war started, this was the key factor that blocked all the roads. They used the Khamba agitation as a reason to do that.

And the soldiers also clashed quite often. I don't know if it was before or after this, there was a stable boy of Norbulinga, the Chinese had put a guard on the bridge. I don't know what was said, maybe they tried to stop him. The stable boy would go straight, right? So since he went, they shot him to death.

Q: Was it some problem between the two? Like one said stop and the other didn't? Was it already the time that they were checking movements?

A: There were guards at the bridge.

Q: Did they stop people?

A: Yes. They also checked the loads and looked at the people, but they didn't fully stop you. During the Mönlam, there was this thing about a bomb and all of that, right? It's basically what I had mentioned to you earlier. When the Dalai Lama was at Yadong, no, it was before going to Yadong. Before the Agreement was completed, from Beijing, the Chinese named Huang Su or Wang Su, something like that, came. This very high-ranking party member Commander-in-Chief was specially sent to see Taktse Rimpoche at Je Kumbum [Tib. rje sku 'bum] Monastery. He asked Taktse Rimpoche about his thoughts. Rimpoche said that he liked to go to China to study, and then he would be able to do any work later. "If I have no education, then it will not help." The Chinese man said, "Don't worry about it, you go to Tibet. I will send soldiers as helpers. You take 6,000 soldiers with you and you can go via the northern route. When you get there, please tell the Dalai Lama not to go abroad and to stay in Tibet. In Tibet it will be good if he works for the Communist Party. Regarding this, please tell him. If the Dalai Lama does not wish to work for the Communist Party, then (you, we) can get rid of him. You can take over the Dalai Lama's status and power." He told Taktse Rimpoche this. Whatever was said or not, it was definite that the Chinese were going to come to Tibet. Tibet's power was apparent to them. After they had come then what was their aim, their thinking? If you open the stomach, all one can see are the internal organs. But if one really grasps the way they were thinking, the essence of their thoughts, like viewing their internal organs, then not only were they walking into Tibet, they were also planning to manipulate [Tib. bed spyod] the Dalai Lama, and if the Dalai Lama did not go on that path, then they were planning to kill him. It is not possible for this to be the idea of one man. The National Communist Party's absolute internal plan on the Dalai Lama was revealed (by that encounter with Taktse).

Like a heart stone, the essence [Tib. snying do] of the plan came out. Taktse Rimpoche, just before he came to Nagchuka, was at Tsachuka [Tib. tshwa chu kha], a 3-4 day journey from Nagchuka. The Changji was Thubden Sangpola [Tib. thub bstan bzang po lags]. During Reting's time he was the one who sent the telegram from China. He was very quick-thinking. Taktse Rimpoche was coming via the north (Tib. chang) and when he arrived, then he could talk, right? But since he was quick-thinking, he took the 3 day journey to Tsachuka to receive Taktse Rimpoche there. When he met Taktse Rimpoche, he immediately asked him about the situation and what they were doing in China. Taktse Rimpoche told him about the Chinese man who came to see him and what he told him. He told everything to Thubden Sangpola. Thubden Sangpola made a report and immediately sent it by non-stop courier. It said that Taktse Rimpoche was coming and that he went all the way to Tsachuka to inquire about the situation, and enclosed were the details of what he said. So an adrun (messenger) was sent. Taktse Rimpoche came up and it was just about

the time the Dalai Lama was going to Yadong. Thinking that he might not reach the Dalai Lama in time, Taktse Rimpoche seems to have traveled quickly. When Taktse Rimpoche arrived at Lhasa, the person to receive him and act like an advisor to brief him on the government ways, was Kungö Dombor and Shasur. Taktse Rimpoche went to see Dombor. Dombor said, "You have said all of these things to Thubden Sangpola. He sent a report all the way from there and since it is an important concern, all of the minutes were read at the meeting, but this was a very excessive mistake [Tib. thal cha]. Now, please don't say anymore ever again about this because this talk will create great disputes between China and the Tibetan government." Dombor had to give him advice not to tell anyone about that. I think it was about a year or two ago when Taktse Rimpoche came here and the Library invited him and asked him about the full story since he first came up. This was one matter he talked about, the most important one. There were the people like Mao, Zhou Enlai, Zhu De, and Liu Shaoqi during 1950-1955. These people in the Communist Party, the Chinese policy of walking into Tibet, of using the Dalai Lama and if not, then getting rid of the Dalai Lama and giving the power to a relative, giving him a name and taking Tibet, were clearly on the Communist path. The bottom line of the plan was that. This was the first case, regarding the Dalai Lama's bodily safety, when they first drew up the plan.

Then later, during the New Year's time, a performing troupe arrived. They came all the way to the Potala outside the Dalai Lama's chambers. They came right up to the Ujog [Tib. dbu lcog] in the Potala where the Trungja takes place. After the Trungja in the east room [Tib. shar rgyud gzim chung], right at the gag (Secretariat), they said the artists performed there. We were not there when the performance was put on since the Dalai Lama was coming there. We left right after the Trungja. At the performance, they said that there was a large, air-filled, rubber fish. They put a bridle on the fish and at the side was sort of a young Chinese boy with short hair. He was carrying a tail-like thing and teasing the fish, and then he rode on the fish. That was the show they put on. Together with the troupe, one Chinese man brought a bomb. He was caught below the stairs. When he was caught he would not release the bomb. He was pushed down and when a foot was stomped on his mouth, he released the bomb. The one who took the bomb away and stomped on him was Rupön Sötrela [Tib. bsod bkras lags]. He's right here. They were going to the Dalai Lama's chambers with bombs. The soldier was imprisoned in the Gusung barracks. He was hardly locked up when the Chinese telephoned saying that one could not even flick him with their finger. So he had to be released. This one came up to the palace chambers. This was seen and he was caught red-handed [Tib. mig mthong lag zin]. Now, how much danger was there to the Dalai Lama's life? Saying that they wanted to give a performance they came all the way to his chambers, and in the commotion, a man with a bomb appeared.

Then during the Thrakor Tsenshe [Tib. grwa skor mtshan bzhes], which was the most elaborate procession when the Dalai Lama took his geshe exam, when the Dalai Lama was coming from Jansebshar, just outside Tsomönlung, his palanquin was arriving. Just before that and if one goes behind Yabshi Phünkang and ahead, there is a house called Nam delek [Tib. gnam bde legs] that previously belonged to Trunyichemmo Ngagpala [Tib. sngags pa lags]. There were some Trapchi soldiers in plain clothes, and in the large windows and the rooftops of all the houses that lined the procession route were soldiers. And they were also in various spots among the crowd. The soldiers from above and those below would signal if something happened. These were the preparations they did, he said. Nam delek's house is on this side, and here is Phurbuchog [Tib. phur bu lcog] Labrang. When the procession arrived at Phurbuchog, there was a signal from the Nam delek roof. On looking around, there was one Chinese soldier with an overcoat and under his coat was something sticking up at the back. He was said to be moving around a lot. Behind him were two soldiers who were keeping an eye on him. When the procession arrived, he was taking out his gun and they caught his hands and took away the gun. The gun was loaded and he was ready to pull the trigger. The gun was a bren-gun. He was caught and put in the police station. Then, just past Sechung Drekhong [Tib. gsar byung 'bras khang] House, you know there is a big field behind the Tromsigang on the way to the stupa Kaling Gobshi [Tib. kar gling sgo bzhi]. There was a big tent where the oracle went into a trance and the Dalai Lama had to stop for a while. There was a lot of commotion there and where the Dalai Lama was, there was a Chinese who was pushing his way through. When he was caught, he had two or three bombs on him. One he had in his hands. Here, about 2 or 3 were caught and were taken to the police station. The bren-gun was taken away and the bombs too. There were such danger to the Dalai Lama that was clearly witnessed. The incident at the Potala, the one who stepped on the mouth, the very person who did that was Rupönla, and he is still here living. The incident at Nam delek where the bren-gun was taken away and where the bombs were taken was by the Trapchi Depön Tashi Berala. When we invited Kungö Chemmo and others and interviewed them and asked him what dangers there were to the Dalai Lama's life, these were the incidents that Trepela [Tashi Bera la] narrated in front of everyone. It is on tape.

He was the main person who did the work. Later when the Kashag ordered that they should be handed over, he petitioned that there was no way that they could be handed over. That if they should be handed over, then the full responsibility for the Dalai Lama personal safety was in the hands of the Kashag and the regiments were not responsible. So this much he said. The Kashag said that there was nothing that the Kashag could do and that they had to be released immediately. These were the real dangers to the Dalai Lama life, the ones where proof is available.

If we take the case of the demonstrations at Norbulinga, nobody knew that the Dalai Lama was leaving. The Dalai Lama left at moonrise on the 8th of the Tibetan calendar. From the 8th, not a single person was allowed in Norbulinga. Those officials who went to the Trungja up to the 8th, they were going back and forth. Those who returned on the 8th would go to Trungja on the 9th, right? Those who had to go were allowed and not the others. Then they were not allowed to return at all. The order was that no matter what the rank of the officials, military commanders, including the magji, no abbots of the monasteries or anyone were allowed to go out. The 21 tsidrun below formed extremely tight security. When the Dalai Lama left on the 8th night, on the 9th there was not a word about the Dalai Lama leaving that reached Lhasa. It was absolutely silent. So people just thought, "Oh today there is no one coming from Norbulinga." I didn't hear anything. On the 10th, again, silence. When one looked at the stables it was absolutely quiet. The Chinese were absolutely sure that the Dalai Lama was there. The Dalai Lama was also telling the people to quiet things down, that it was better to talk. He even called a meeting and said that. To the Chinese, the Dalai Lama said that when things subsided he would leisurely meet them. He sent the message through Shasur's servant to Ngabö, who was staying with the Chinese. Tan Guansan also wrote a letter. In that there was a short note from Ngabö which ordered to sent back the reactionaries outside Norbulinga. "Do not worry. If they do not listen to your order, then please indicate secretly where in Norbulinga that you are staying. Please let us know since Zhongyang is thinking of protecting it." What was certain was that if the people did not move, then they were going to suppress us. That was the real reason why the Dalai Lama had to leave. He had no

choice but to leave. And the oracle also said that the Dalai Lama should leave in three days, right? From the Chinese side that was the real inside thinking. This was very critical for the Dalai Lama to make up his mind.

So well satisfied that people thought that the Dalai Lama was still there, he left on the 8th. On the 9th, it was all quiet. There was nothing to be heard on the 10th. Then on the night of the 10th, at 2 o'clock [Western: 11th, 2.a.m.], the night barrage began. At night Norbulinga was attacked and there was an endless barrage of gunfire from around Lhasa to Norbulinga. From all directions the incessant gunfire was like the popping when roasting peas, the cannons were just so continuous, rapidly firing. Norbulinga was just a heap of dust [Tib. *thal phung*]. The Drepung monks who had gone to Gempel [Tib. *dge 'phel*] to look at Norbulinga said that Norbulinga's walls and the leaves of the trees could not be seen, but only large black dust that touched the sky. The same was said by those who looked from the Potala or Sera. Anyway, all the firing was at Norbulinga. So from 2 o'clock until 6 or 7 in the evening there was heavy firing, and then the gunfire subsided, but it never ceased. Only the heavy pounding had subsided. We left Norbulinga just before dark and crossed the swampy area [Tib. *'dam ra*] where one could not see too well. We left at that time, but when we looked the next morning, though the firing had subsided, it looked like it was the same and there was nothing but a huge black dust heap that touched the sky. I spend exactly 17 hours under the cannon fire running here and there in Norbulinga. I was a guard, but after the 10th night, after the firing, until the sun came out, I stayed guarding the gate. Tsidrun Gyentsen Chamba la [Tib. *rgyal mtshan byams pa lags*] came here (to India) and worked at the Private Office, but now he's dead. He was a new official and he was at the back of the northern gate and was the head of a number of Litang soldiers. He said, "Why stay around? Come and help shoot." So I said alright, and left Gendün Chömpe there and went with Gyentsen Chamba to the park where all around the wall there were holes for guns and they were shooting at the motor station.

There were some walls that had some bends. In one of the bends one could clearly see the gun holes of the motor station. I had very good binoculars. I looked and I could see people's heads moving. Aiming at those holes, we were shooting bren-guns from this side. Where we were, where the Litang people were, a bren-gun was fixed. Just after the sun rose, the gun was fixed in the hole and the person's body was sideways, with the eyes on the sight. So if a bullet came through it would just pass by and not hit the body. So the bren-gun was fired from there while the person was to one side. The person who had his head lowered to the gun sight was shot right in the forehead. We were all lined up and the person who was shot, like a gymnast he somersaulted backwards and died instantly. Nearby were holes that were for protection from the cannons and there was a lot of sand. When we left him there, so much blood was coming out that it discouraged people. When a human body is hit with a gun, a dead body is really horrible. The body swelled and became huge right before one's eyes. There was nothing that could be done.

We just put him in a pit, like where radishes were buried [Tib. *lab dong*] and covered him with sand. There was nothing to be done, he was shot right in the forehead.